DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 200 891 CS 005 878

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TITLE The University Reading Clinic: A Needed and Viable Means of Servicing Community and Schools.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 20p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Los Angeles, CA, April 13-17, 1981). Some pages may not reproduce due to small print.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College School Cooperation: Elementary Secondary Education: Higher Education: Inservice Teacher Education: *Needs Assessment: *Reading Centers: Reading Diagnosis: Reading Difficulties: *Reading Instruction: *Reading Research: School Surveys: *Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Eastern Michigan University

ABSTRACT

A total of 954 teachers in ten school districts near Eastern Michigan University (Ypsilanti) responded to a questionnaire concerning their needs for university-related assistance in reading instruction. The results revealed the following: (1) teachers were greatly concerned about reading instruction; (2) most teachers were able to recognize a high incidence of reading problems among their students; (3) most teachers employed more than one means of dealing with reading problems; (4) most teachers supported the idea of university assistance with reading instruction, especially in the areas of screening, diagnosis, and remedial services for students: and (5) most teachers were interested in receiving specialized training in reading diagnosis and instruction. (A copy of the questionnaire is appended.) (FL)

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THE UNIVERSITY READING CLINIC
A NEEDED AND VIABLE MEANS OF SERVICING COMMUNITY AND SCHOOLS

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University reading clinics primarily serve as an integral part of the academic reading program for graduate level students. Supervised training in reading diagnosis and remediation is provided through practicum coursework, housed in the clinic facility, for students preparing to be reading specialists or resource teachers. Adjacent services to individual families and schools are provided concurrently, particularly through the diagnosis and subsequent tutoring of community children and youth experiencing reading difficulty in the school setting.

The impact and benefit of such services beyond the professional preparation of graduate students are inevitably limited to those associated families and schools whose child or student, respectively, is being or has been instructed and/or assessed in the clinic.

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Despite the effectiveness of applied practices characteristic of many university-based clinics, despite the relevance of the diagnostic findings to the client's school instruction, and despite the expertise in reading growth and development gained through the systematic study afforded a clinical setting, internal limitations inherent in the tradition of staffing and operation, restricts the university reading clinic in its outreach potential.

The purpose of this paper is to report the findings of a recent study of the expressed needs of teachers for university reading-related services. During 1978-1979, Eastern Michigan University surveyed ten local school districts to determine if districts were in need of assistance in meeting students' needs in reading; to define the needs and to specify the kinds of university-extended services that in the opinions of teachers-in-service would be most apt to meet those needs. The study strongly supports a revitalization of the university reading clinic. A critical need for increased diagnostic and remedial services for individual community children and school-aged youth must be met in addition to addressing the needs of a new clientele -- the teachers-in-service who require technical assistance in meeting the needs of students with reading problems in the classroom.

Procedures

The need for reading-related services was assessed through self-reported information on a written questionnaire instrument. The instrument was administered to a representative sample of K-12 classroom and resource teachers and administrators in Southeastern Michigan. Ten districts participated in the assessment. All questionnaires were disseminated through mailings to selected schools subsequent to favorable review of each district's central administration. No second mailings or "reminder" procedures were employed.

A total of 1883 questionnaires were distributed among the ten cooperating districts. The instrument generated an exceptionally high rate of response for a single mailing effort. A total of 954 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a sufficiently representative sample (a 51% return) from which to estimate existing needs. The sample was representative, as well, in the proportions of teacher respondents across grade level, subject area and specialized roles. The districts accounted for approximately 60,555 elementary, 26,241 middle- or junior high school and 35,162 senior high school students.

The questionnaire instrument and total responses across all districts are presented in Figure 1. Responses were computed in absolute, relative and adjusted frequencies. The various frequencies are presented in the tables adjacent to

the assessment questions. Absolute frequencies indicate the total number of responses within each question choice; relative frequencies project the responses as a percentage relative to the total number of respondents in each district. However, since respondents did not necessarily answer each question, frequencies were adjusted to project percentages reflecting only the total number of persons answering each question.

Sample

A total of 954 completed questionnaires were obtained from the ten participating school districts. The resulting sample was sufficiently representative as indicated both in its exceptionally high rate of response from a single mailing effort (over 51% completed returns) as well as its proportions particularly of teacher respondents across grades, subject areas and specialized roles.

An examination of questions 1, 2 and 3 on the needs questionnaire (Background Information) revealed the following information about the sample. The largest number of returns were from primary teachers (grades 1-3), totalling 258. The second largest group of respondents represented middle-school or junior high grades, totalling 245 completed questionnaires.

Approximately one-half of the returns came form teachers, teaching in preschool-grade 6, with the remaining one-half representing middle-senior high grades. In the latter group, returns were equally distributed across subject areas including science, math, social sciences and language arts.

Over 70%, or 681 respondents, identified themselves as regular classroom teachers; an additional 8%, or 80 respondents, identified themselves as resource teachers or teacher consultants. The 20% remaining were equally distributed across specialized roles including building administrators, media specialists, counselors and Title project personnel.

Results

The needs questionnaire was specifically designed to determine the degree and manner with which educators-in-service 1) are professionally concerned about reading instruction; 2) perceive the prevalence of reading problems warranting special attention among the children with whom they have daily contact; 3) choose to handle reading problems in their professional settings; 4) identify specific university-extended reading services as immediate to the needs of their respective districts; and 5) are interested in receiving practicum training in the analysis and treatment of reading problems.

The results of the needs assessment were interpreted along these five dimensions:

1. Concern about reading instruction.

The results of the needs assessment strongly suggest that concern for reading instruction among teachers is great.

Fifty-two percent, or 496 teachers, identified the teaching of reading as a primary professional responsibility. Of those teachers who did not perceive reading instruction as among their professional responsibilities, 24%, or 227 respondents, indicated that the reading ability of their students was a growing concern of theirs. An additional 15%, or 142 respondents, reported that while reading was a prerequisite to their curriculum, they found it necessary to provide alternative methods of teaching subject area content for problem readers. (See question 4, Needs Assessment)

2. Prevalence of reading problems warranting special attention.

The results of the needs assessment strongly suggest that teachers recognize a high incidence of moderate to severe reading problems among the children with whom they are in daily contact.

Approximately forty-five percent, or 432 respondents, reported that over 15% of the students with whom they work are experiencing at least moderate reading

difficulties. Using an index of 25 students per classroom, it may then be realized that in 432 classrooms (45% of those sampled) at least four students are in need of some special attention in reading. A result of Cross-tabulations of questionnaire items revealed too that the prevalence of reading problems is equally recognized by elementary and secondary teachers. Approximately two hundred forty K-6 elementary educators and 186 middle school educators identified over 15% of the students with whom they work as exhibiting reading problems warranting special attention.

The need is even more considerable taking into account that over 78%, or 737 teachers, perceived that at least 6% or no fewer than two children in their classrooms are experiencing reading difficulty requiring special attention. (See question 6, Needs Assessment)

3. Ways of handling reading problems.

The results of the needs assessment indicate that teachers will generally employ more than one way of dealing with a reading problem in the classroom. However varied they may be in the choices they make, teachers consistently refer reading problems suspected in the classroom to a specialist or resource person. Teachers do not appear hesitant or reluctant to go outside the

classroom for assistance. Over 71%, or 682 respondents, reported that if a child appears to have a reading difficulty, they refer the child to available resources.

The results suggest, also, that the same teacher may, in addition and concurrent to referring the child to a school specialist, choose to deal with the problem directly (45%, or 401 respondents, so indicated); seek assistance from colleagues (41%, or 391 respondents, so indicated); or encourage parents to seek service outside the school system (19%, or 181 respondents, so indicated). (See question 7, Needs Assessment)

4. Identification of university-extended reading services.

The results of the needs assessment indicate strong support for a variety of services available through a university reading clinic. Moreover, educators-in-service reported the need for university reading services despite the consistency with which they identified the use of referrals to school specialists as a commonly employed method of dealing with reading problems in the classroom. The apparent willingness of teachers to seek assistance outside the classroom may indeed be expanded to include resource assistance made available outside of the school district as well. This may suggest, too, that a recognized need shared by classroom and resource teachers for further assistance, particularly for

technical expertise in implementing wide-spread screening and providing in-depth reading diagnosis and treatment afforded a university clinic setting is more real than apparent.

The following reading services to children, schools and families were identified as most immediate across all districts:

- screening (preliminary assessment to identify existence and scope of reading problems); 51%, or 490 respondents, so indicated
- diagnostic evaluation (in-depth assessment of the nature of reading problems and recommendations for instruction); 60%, or 575 respondents, so indicated
- reading instruction (one-to-one basis); 63%, or 599 respondents, so indicated
- follow-up reports to schools including a summary of diagnosis and instructional strategies found to be effective; 45%, or 432 respondents, so indicated
- concurrent parent training opportunities; 57%, or 541 respondents, so indicated
- concurrent teacher training opportunities; 48%, or 461 respondents, so indicated. (See question 10, Needs Assessment)

Additional reading services supported were those designed to meet the needs of populations of clients. These include:

- reading services for gifted children; 49%, or 467 respondents, so indicated
- reading improvement programs for adults; 40%, or 481 respondents, so indicated
- reading readiness services for young children; 46%, or 441 respondents, so indicated. (See question 10, Needs Assessment)

So well, in fact, were examples of university reading services received that no service listed for evaluation yielded less than 40%, or no fewer than 381 respondents, identifying it as an immediate district need.

5. Interest in practicum training.

The results of the needs assessment suggest that an interest among teachers in receiving specialized training in reading diagnosis and instruction does exist. Particularly in view of the representativeness of the sample of teachers surveyed, the numbers of those expressing immediate and/or considerable interest were relatively high. A total of 102 teachers (11%) expressed immediate interest, an additional 199 (21%) expressed considerable interest.

Of those surveyed, only 253 (26.5%) identified such training as outside of their professional interest. A total of 439 respondents (46%) indicated an interest in receiving more information about the opportunities for graduate coursework extended through a university reading center.

Discussion

The results of the needs assessment document strong support for establishing and extending university reading services to local community children, associated schools and teachers. The results revealed that teachers not only perceive a critical need for reading assistance and training, but that they are consistent with respect to defining their needs in terms of the teaching situations in which they are most evident. Moreover, teachers readily identify specific and varied services of a university reading clinic as immediate to the needs of their district despite the finding that the most frequently reported action taken for dealing with reading problems was the referral of children to school resource personnel.

Specifically, the assessment pinpointed the need for technical assistance in screening, diagnostic and remedial services for students, follow-up reporting to teachers and opportunities for teacher training in reading.

The need for clinic services is not without apparent source. The results of the assessment revealed two findings that substantiate the greatness of the need: 1) teachers perceive an alarmingly high incidence of reading problems. Of the 954 respondents, 737 (78%) reported that at least two students in their classrooms require special attention in reading; 2) teachers are experiencing difficulty in accommodating the wide range of reading abilities within a classroom, particularly in assisting a student reading below grade level. Over 70% of the respondents reported these teaching situations as exemplary of their greatest professional concern.

The apparent willingness of teachers to seek assistance outside the classroom coupled with the expressed need for services rendered by a university, suggests that university reading clinics may do well to expand the graduate training component of their facility to include outreach activities designed for teachers-in-service.

The university reading clinic is a viable facility through which leadership in local reading education can be readily established. University reading clinics, those in operation and those in preparation, should carefully consider serving varied resource functions. Activities including short-term training and consultative services for teachers, supervised practicum experiences for in-service teachers, the dissemination and demonstration of innovative reading prac-

practices, and the development and dissemination of assessment instruments may prove valuable additions to those activities traditionally characteristic of university reading clinics.

Figure 1.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

DIRECTIONS: DISTRICT: _____

Please circle the response to each question which appropriately describes your situation. Your cooperation in responding carefully to each question is greatly appreciated.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. What grade level are you presently teaching?
   a. Pre-school
   b. K
   c. 1-3
   d. 4-6
   e. Middle school or Junior High
   f. Senior High
   g. all elementary grades
   h. all secondary grades

2. What subject area are you presently teaching?
   a. elementary--all subjects
   b. reading (Title I, corrective or developmental)
   c. science, math
   d. social sciences
   e. physical education
   f. art, music, speech, drama
   g. media (library resources)
   h. special education--all subjects
   i. English/language arts, humanities
   j. foreign language
   k. vocational education, home economics, industrial or graphic arts
   l. other; please specify _____

3. Which of the following best describes your present professional role?
   a. regular classroom teacher
   b. special education teacher (teacher consultant/teacher resource)
   c. art, music, speech, drama or physical education teacher
   d. Title project teacher
   e. administrator
   f. counselor
   g. teacher aide
   h. media specialist
   i. other, please specify _____

ALL DISTRICTS (N=954)

	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)	Adjusted Frequency (%)
1a.	11	1.2	1.2
b.	37	3.9	3.9
c.	258	27.0	27.0
d.	172	18.0	18.0
e.	243	25.5	25.5
f.	137	14.4	14.4
g.	82	8.0	8.0
h.	14	1.5	1.5
TOTAL	N= 954	100.0	100.0
2a.	429	45.0	45.0
b.	46	4.8	4.8
c.	99	10.4	10.4
d.	64	6.7	6.7
e.	35	3.7	3.7
f.	36	3.8	3.8
g.	20	2.1	2.1
h.	48	5.0	5.0
i.	53	5.6	5.6
j.	6	.6	.6
k.	46	4.8	4.8
l.	72	7.5	7.5
TOTAL	N=954	100.0	100.0
3a.	681	71.4	71.4
b.	80	8.4	8.4
c.	68	7.1	7.1
d.	21	2.2	2.2
e.	26	2.7	2.7
f.	28	2.9	2.9
g.	13	1.4	1.4
h.	19	2.0	2.0
i.	18	1.9	1.9
TOTAL	N=954	100.0	100.0

IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS FOR READING EDUCATION

4. To what extent do you feel professionally involved in the teaching of reading? Circle the most appropriate response.
   a. I see the teaching of reading as one of my primary responsibilities.
   b. Reading is a prerequisite for the curriculum in my classroom but I provide alternative methods of teaching subject area content for problem readers.
   c. Reading is a prerequisite for the curriculum in my classroom but I provide reading instruction for problem readers.
   d. My responsibilities do not include involvement with reading instruction, but the reading ability of my students is a growing concern of mine.
   e. I am not involved in the teaching of reading and where problems exist, they are someone else's responsibility.

5. Approximately how many students do you have contact with daily?
   a. 0-30
   b. 31-50
   c. 51-100
   d. over 100

6. In your estimation, what percentage of the students with whom you come in contact are experiencing at least moderate reading problems (to the degree that you feel some special attention may be warranted)?
   a. 1-5%
   b. 6-10%
   c. 11-15%
   d. over 15%
   e. unable to judge

7. If a child appears to have a reading difficulty, what do you do? Circle all appropriate responses.
   a. deal with the problem without the assistance of others
   b. request assistance from other teachers
   c. refer the child to a resource person or specialist within the school system
   d. encourage the parent to refer the child to a reading service and/or tutor outside of the school system
   e. take no action -- continue regular instruction

8. Which situation below presents the most difficulty or concern to you as a teacher? Circle the most appropriate response.
   a. challenging advanced readers
   b. assisting children who are experiencing reading difficulties (children reading below grade level)
   c. motivating children to read -- generating interest in reading
   d. accommodating the range of reading abilities within my classes

ALL DISTRICTS (N=954)

	Absolute Freq.	Relative Freq. (%)	Adjusted Freq. (%)
4a.	496	52.0	53.2
b.	142	14.9	15.2
c.	39	4.1	4.2
d.	227	23.8	24.3
e.	29	3.0	3.1
TOTAL	N=933	97.8	100.0
5a.	389	40.8	41.1
b.	115	12.1	12.2
c.	110	11.5	11.6
d.	332	34.5	35.1
TOTAL	N=946	99.2	100.0
6a.	117	12.3	12.5
b.	167	17.5	17.8
c.	138	14.5	14.7
d.	432	45.3	46.2
e.	82	8.5	8.8
TOTAL	N=936	98.1	100.0
7a.	401	42.0	44.0
b.	391	41.0	42.9
c.	682	71.5	74.9
d.	181	19.0	20.0
e.	60	6.3	6.6
TOTAL	N=911*		
8a.	42	4.4	4.8
b.	307	32.2	34.9
c.	163	17.1	18.5
d.	371	38.9	42.0
TOTAL	N=883	92.6	100.0

*Respondents were not restricted to a single choice; absolute frequency column totals ≠ N

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

9. To the best of your knowledge, what services outside the school system are presently available to children with reading difficulties? Circle all appropriate responses.
   a. university centers/clinics
   b. community services; please specify _____
   c. private tutors
   d. other; please specify Most respondents selecting 9d indicated that they were unaware of existing outside resources

10. Listed below are examples of the kinds of reading services that could be extended to children, schools and families through a university reading center.
    Circle each service that reflects a need for your district.
    a. Screening (upon referral, preliminary assessment to identify existence and scope of reading problems, including recommendations for further testing or instruction).
    b. diagnostic evaluation (upon referral, in-depth assessment of the nature of reading problems and recommendations for instruction)
    c. reading instruction (one-to-one basis)
    d. written reports to school (with permission of parent) including a summary of diagnosis and instructional strategies found to be effective
    e. concurrent parent training opportunities (discussion, information and demonstration sessions opened to parents of children being served)
    f. concurrent teacher training opportunities (graduate coursework in the analysis and treatment of reading problems)
    g. reading services for gifted children
    h. reading improvement programs for adults
    i. reading readiness services for young children
    j. other services; please specify e.g., improved district testing program; increased access to resource personnel

11. A university reading center extends opportunities for advanced coursework for graduate students. Through supervised practicums, graduate students are provided first-hand experiences in reading diagnosis, corrective and developmental reading instruction.

    Please indicate the extent of your interest in taking practicum coursework.
    Circle appropriate responses.
    a. of immediate interest to me
    b. of considerable interest to me
    c. I would like to learn more about it
    d. does not reflect my professional interest

12. Eastern Michigan University is proposing to establish a specialist's degree in Reading. Please indicate the extent of your interest. Circle appropriate responses.
    a. of immediate interest to me
    b. of considerable interest to me
    c. I would like to learn more about it
    d. does not reflect my professional interest

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ALL DISTRICTS (N=954)

	Absolute Freq.	Relative Freq. (%)	Adjusted Freq. (%)
9a.	345	36.2	45.0
b.	128	13.4	16.7
c.	566	59.3	73.8
d.	107	11.2	14.0
TOTAL	N=767*		
10a.	490	51.4	54.7
b.	575	60.3	64.2
c.	599	62.8	66.9
d.	532	45.3	48.3
e.	541	56.7	60.4
f.	461	48.3	51.5
g.	467	49.0	52.2
h.	381	39.9	42.6
i.	441	46.2	49.3
j.	36	3.8	4.0
TOTAL	N=895*		
11a.	102	10.9	11.7
b.	199	20.9	21.8
c.	439	46.0	48.1
d.	253	26.5	27.7
TOTAL	N=912*		
12a.	88	9.2	9.8
b.	182	19.1	19.7
c.	341	35.7	37.0
d.	361	37.8	39.1
TOTAL	N=921*		

*Respondents were not restricted to a single choice; absolute frequency column totals ≠ N